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Press Release

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REGIONAL NGOS UNITE AGAINST WILDLIFE CRIME

Hanoi, March 10th, 2009 - Sixteen Asian representatives from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in nine Asian countries met last week in Hanoi with the aim of increasing regional cooperation to combat the illegal trade of wildlife.

The illegal wildlife trade is a multibillion dollar global industry that transcends national borders and is threatening many species across Asia with extinction. Regional cooperation between governments and NGOs is essential to addressing this problem.

The meeting participants shared experiences about their efforts to combat wildlife crime and discussed practical ways they can cooperate and communicate to assist their governments in dealing with trans-border wildlife crime.



Louis Ng from ACRES, Singapore, Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao from ENV, Vietnam, and Loretta Ann Shepherd from MYCAT Malaysia, discuss how they could cooperate in a cross-border wildlife trade case.

The meeting was hosted by Education For Nature-Vietnam (ENV), Vietnam's first local NGO focused on wildlife protection. ENV's Wildlife Crime Unit operates a National Wildlife Crime Hotline, established in 2005 to facilitate and motivate public reporting of wildlife crimes and involvement in efforts to combat the wildlife trade. ENV works very closely with law enforcement and wildlife protection agencies throughout Vietnam and has documented more than 1,600 cases in just over three years.

This regional NGO meeting is intended to support broader regional efforts by the ASEAN Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN WEN) to build and strengthen cooperation between governments of ASEAN member states to combat the illegal wildlife trade across the region.

"Clearly there is an important role for NGOs to play in supporting their governments address trans-national wildlife crime. Our vision is to strengthen ASEAN WEN by helping develop a culture of cooperation between governments on wildlife crime", said ENV's Wildlife Trade Program Coordinator, Ms Nguyen Thi Van Anh.

“The meeting brought together a diverse group of very motivated people from across the region who face surprisingly similar obstacles at home in their endeavors to combat wildlife crime”, said Van Anh. “We all recognize the need to work together across borders, sharing information and assisting our governments to put criminals who operate with impunity across our borders out of business for good.”

Van Anh notes that information sharing has already proved effective in regional wildlife trade cases. For example, in February 2008 Hai Phong Customs agents confiscated a shipment of approximately 24 tons of frozen pangolins and pangolin scales. In this case, ENV and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in Indonesia cooperated to help transfer vital information on the case from Hai Phong Customs in Vietnam to the Indonesian authorities. This information reportedly later led Indonesian police to a warehouse where approximately 14 tons of pangolins were seized and arrests were made.

Participating in the meeting were representatives from NGOs in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam.

ENV would like to extend our thanks to the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy for their assistance and support. We would also like to thank the Hilton Hanoi Opera for their generous support in providing the meeting venue and meals.

About Education for Nature - Vietnam

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on conservation of nature and the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about environmental issues of local, national and global significance, ranging from protection of wildlife and natural ecosystems to climate change. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence attitudes and behavior, not only highlighting the need to protect Vietnam's rich natural heritage and the living world around us, but also encouraging greater public participation in achieving this important and challenging task.

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